

Serial No. 09/982,035
Response dated April 27, 2004
Reply to Office Action of January 28, 2004

Docket No. 5000-4963

REMARKS

Claims 1-18, 25-34, and 41-47 were previously pending in this application. Claims 19-24 and 35-40 have been withdrawn from consideration. Claims 2 and 26 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1, 18, 25, 42, 43, 45 and 46 have been amended. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to independent claims 1 and 25 are based upon aspects of the invention from dependent claims 2, 26, 42, 43, 45 and 46, and therefore, the amendments should not raise issues that require an additional search. Applicants respectfully submit no new matter has been added by way of this amendment. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request entry of the amendments and reconsideration of the above-identified application, in view of the above amendments and following remarks.

Applicants thank the Examiner for indication that claim 41 is in condition for allowance. See Office Action at p. 9.

Claim Rejections – 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-18, 25-34 and 42-47 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), as being anticipated by Clitheros, et al. (US Patent No. 4,564,410). Applicants respectfully submit that amended independent claims 1 and 25, as well as the claims dependent therefrom are not anticipated by the Clitheros patent, in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*:

a supporting device movably supporting the processing device, wherein the supporting device includes a slidably supported structure and is movable during the processing operation relative to and along the portion of the automobile body being processed, the portion being processed includes a concave portion and the processing device includes a processing head that is movable relative to and along the concave portion while a tip of the processing head engages the concave portion.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Clitheros patent does not teach or suggest either (1) a processing head that is movable relative to and along the concave portion while a tip of the processing head engages the concave portion or (2) the supporting device including a slidably supported structure, as recited in amended independent claims 1 and 25.

Clitheros, et al. does not teach or suggest a processing head movable relative to and along the concave portion while a processing head tip engages the concave portion. Instead, Clitheros, et al. discloses an apparatus for processing a workpiece, wherein a nozzle is movable on a support device by drive motors in three axial directions. Specifically, as illustrated in Clitheros' Figures 2 and 3, the adhesive application apparatus 10 is capable of movement in an X-direction, a Y-direction and a Z-direction due to drive motor/pulley systems 44, 42; 74, 72; and 84, 82, respectively. Also, motor 92 and worm gear 90 enable the application device to rotate about the Z axis.

In contrast, it is not necessary to drive the processing head of the claimed invention by the drive motors and worm gear system necessary to drive the adhesive application device in Clitheros, et al. For example, in an embodiment of the invention, the cylinders 25 and 27 are retracted during the processing operation and may not necessarily serve to move the processing head. Advantageously, because the processing head engages the concave portion, the

processing head can move along the concave portion during processing without requiring the drive devices taught by Clitheros, et al. Accordingly, both the construction and the operation of the processing apparatus can be simplified.

Furthermore, Clitheros, et al. does not teach or suggest a supporting device that includes a slidably supported structure. The Examiner asserts that elements 90 and 92 from Clitheros' Figures 2, 3, and 6 anticipate the claimed structure that is rotatably and slidably supported on the support structure (See, Office Action, page 5, ¶5.). However, as clearly shown in Clitheros' Figures 6 and 7, motor 92 and worm gear 90 only facilitate rotational movement about the vertical axis (the axis along the length of feed pipe 80 shown in Figure 6). Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that implementing a worm gear with a motor, as in Clitheros, et al., does not anticipate implementing a slidably supported structure, as recited in amended independent claim 1.

Accordingly, Applicants submit that for at least these reasons amended independent claim 1 is patentably distinct from the cited reference. For at least similar reasons, Applicants submit that amended independent claim 25, as well as claims 3-18, 27-34, and claims 42-47, which are directly or indirectly dependent on independent claims 1 and 25, are also patentably distinct from the cited reference. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of this ground of rejections.

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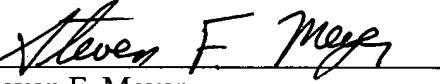
CONCLUSION

It is now believed that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. In view of these remarks, an early and favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: April 27, 2004

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